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Agriculture and Its Discontents: Coalitional Politics at the WTO with Special Reference to India's Food Security Interests

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Abstract

The demise of the Doha round of trade negotiations is often attributed to deadlocks in agricultural negotiations between the developed and the developing world. Why has agriculture been so difficult to negotiate? This article explains North-South agricultural negotiations through the lens of coalition politics, especially the shift from bloc to issue-based diplomacy from the developing world. We argue against the proposition in the negotiation literature that multiple coalitions at the international level allow negotiators room to maneuver. Our study shows that bloc coalitions in fact allowed for compromise more than issue-based coalitions in agriculture, which are often

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supported by strong domestic constituencies. Empirically, the article focuses on the Uruguay Round when the North and South struck an agreement on agriculture and the Doha Round, which remains deadlocked. The article also provides an in-depth case study of India's agricultural interests and its food security program in the context of the WTO.

Keywords

agriculture – World Trade Organization (WTO) – deadlocks – coalitions – India – negotiation

Agriculture remains a fraught issue in all trade negotiations, but especially so in global North-South interactions accounting for a bulk of the deadlock in the now stalled Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations (Dijck & Faber 2006; MacBain 2008; LaBorde & Martin 2012; Wilkinson 2014). The developing world claims comparative advantage in many agricultural products but must confront many import restrictions in developed country markets, where agriculture is one of the most protected and subsidized sectors. The developed world often points to similar restrictions and tariff peaks in the developing world. Agriculture was either mostly excluded from international negotiations until the Uruguay Round (1986–94) of the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade, or included as part of preferential provisions for the developing world such as 'imperial preferences' given to former colonies, or quantitative restrictions on sugar exports to the US or the European Community. Although the Uruguay Round included agriculture in its the agenda, the Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture (URAA) was mostly shaped at the end-game negotiations in November 1992 at the Blair House in Washington, D.C. between the US and European Community. The Doha Round deadlocked in 2008 over agriculture. This article examines international and domestic coalitional activity, both for and against agriculture liberalization, often cited as an explanatory factor.

Why is agricultural trade difficult to negotiate? North-South agriculture negotiation outcomes have featured side-payments, special treatment for products, deals where the developing world was excluded, and deadlocks. The Doha Round of trade talks launched in 2001 offered the best hope for an agricultural agreement and liberalization but talks stalled after 2008 when the United States accused India and China of producing the deadlock, while the latter two accused the US. India's trade minister, Kamal Nath, walked out of the negotiations in representing a coalition known as G33, and China refused to agree on the safeguards for developing country farmers. Each side was also responding to domestic constituencies in the positions taken in Geneva.

Contrary to the expectations about a zone of agreement from multiple issues and actors at a multilateral negotiation, the Doha Round deadlock on agriculture remains. Therefore, the case of agriculture is theoretically important, offering insights on persistent deadlocks at multilateral negotiations. Our analysis of the agriculture case seeks to generate a hypothesis about coalitional behavior in multilateral negotiations exploring the conditions under which multiple coalitions are least likely to produce an agreement.[3] Following negotiation literature, we posit coalitions as groups of actors explicitly or implicitly coordinating their preferences toward a shared goal or interest.

The key distinction in this article is between bloc diplomacy and issue-based coalitions. The hypothesis we generate from our analysis is that issue-based coalitions, which respond to domestic interests, tie the hands of their negotiators and offer them less room to maneuver at the international level. Bloc diplomacy results mostly from international coordination, involving fewer domestic hurdles. While multilateral negotiations feature many negotiation strategies, our argument foregrounds the importance of one important factor: coalition-building at the international and domestic levels. In particular we note that agricultural deadlocks could be overcome when developing world's preferences in negotiations were mostly settled through bloc diplomacy, and the end game only featured great powers. Bloc diplomacy was effective in getting developing world to the table, even though it only delivered on side-payments such as preferential schemes rather than agricultural liberalization. Since then, issue-based coalitions from the developing world have responded to their domestic interests, which include groups that would benefit or lose from agricultural trade liberalization. Contrary to expectations from theory about multiple coalitions widening the zone for agreement (Putnam 1985; Raiffa 1982), we note that countries have often acted as veto players in agricultural negotiations in response to their domestic interests. The case of India and the G33 coalition examined later is illustrative.

Global South bloc coalitions explain the advocacy for including agriculture in multilateral negotiations, while issue-driven domestic coalitions, depending on the context, explain both the opposition and support for liberalizing agricultural trade. This story is well known, but we endow it with the following twist: domestic and international interests were fairly well aligned in bloc diplomacy – in a 'for or against' agriculture negotiations sense – prior to the

3 See Eckstein 1975 and Odell 2001 for details on a hypothesis generating case study.

Uruguay Round approaching almost a two-party game. Deadlocks were broken with side-payments: systems of non-reciprocal preferences along with quotas for the developing world. During the Uruguay Round, the most effective agriculture coalition was the Cairns Group, which included both developed and developing countries, and presaged the arrival of coalitions focused on specific issues for the developing world. After the Uruguay Round, agricultural negotiations are no longer governed through bloc-type homogenous coalitions at the national level advocating for either trade liberalization or seeking protections. Therefore, both the international and domestic levels feature multiple heterogeneous issue-based coalitions that make agreement difficult. These coalitions include those that benefitted from past systems of preferences.

The argument in this article, therefore, revolves around the shift from bloc to multiple coalitions in multilateral agricultural negotiations. Singular coalitions, either arguing for or against agricultural negotiations made the game 'simple' or bilateral even if hard to resolve. Since the inclusion of agriculture at the Uruguay Round and thereafter, the presence of multiple coalitions at the global and domestic levels in the developed and developed worlds has made reaching agreement even harder. The 'dance of the packages' at the Doha Round at successive ministerials is an example, although getting agreement on any kind of modality is even harder.[4] Raiffa (1982: 274) notes that multiple coalitions make negotiations ambiguous that often allow for compromise. In the case of strong links to historically well-organized domestic interests, as in agriculture, ambiguity and the prospects for compromise decrease.

Multilateral negotiations feature many negotiation tactics, but coalition building distinguishes multilateral from bilateral negotiations. Our in-depth analysis of the Uruguay and Doha Round also allows us to hold constant a few other negotiation tactics: both rounds offer opportunities for trade-offs and linkages but these were successful only during the Uruguay Round (Davis 2004). The difference we argue is in the coalition make-up and its goals. This difference also allows an analysis of another negotiation tactic, namely agenda-setting, that was especially important for bloc diplomacy.

The article explores the argument on coalitions in three parts. The next section provides the theoretical background for understanding two-level games and multiple coalitions. The subsequent section provides a historical 'macro'

4 Agreements on modalities specify an overall framework or processes for negotiating trade concessions in an issue. In agriculture, these modalities have often involved some minimal agreement on classification ('boxes') for domestic subsidies. Zartman's (1989) notion of 'ripe for resolution' or Raiffa's (1982) 'dance of the packages' is relevant for thinking about modalities and negotiation processes.

background of coalitions in the GATT/WTO negotiations: bloc diplomacy until the Uruguay Round and its breakdown during and after the Uruguay Round. The final section provides a micro look or a case study on India, beginning with its mixed agricultural interests in the Uruguay Round, the evolution of its stance on food security at the Doha Round and its veto of the Bali package in 2014 from this perspective. The India case is interesting because it allows an examination of the domestic factors, which dictated the seemingly contradictory position India took for and against agricultural liberalization at the Doha Round.

Explaining Coalitions in Two-Level Games

Multiple issue-based coalitions in agriculture produce multiple deadlocks. This logic is counter-intuitive. Generally, multi-party negotiations are complex but coalitions produce simplicity and allow for agreement especially when there are moderate coalitions that can position themselves between hardline groups and resolve deadlocks (Haines 1984; Narlikar 2003; Singh 2006). The logic of our counter-intuition is simple: multiple coalitions or parties in a negotiation find it hard to resolve differences when each is beholden to strong domestic constituencies, and the moderate coalitions are less important.

This argument connecting coalitions with domestic and international politics is examined through two literatures. First, Putnam's (1988) now famous article speaking to the entanglements between domestic and international politics provides a point of entry: our review situates coalition building as central to understanding the links between the two-level games. Second, the analysis both borrows and departs from Narlikar's (2003) analysis of coalitions, in particular the shift from bloc to issue-based diplomacy.

The key element that distinguishes multilateral from bilateral negotiations is the presence of coalitions at the international level (Hampson & Hart, 1995: 5). The two-level negotiation analysis provides the link for domestic and international preferences, and coalitional analysis is salient to translating this logic to multilateral negotiations. Putnam (1988: 437–438) writes that agreement or no-agreement ultimately depends on the size of win-sets or the largest possible set of agreeable alternatives at the international level that can be agreed upon by domestic constituencies. The presence of multiple constituencies or heterogeneous interests at the domestic level increases the alternatives, or negotiating slack, for the international negotiator to find a win-set that may be agreeable to the maximum number of constituencies back home. As Putnam notes, "domestic divisions may actually improve the prospect for international cooperation" (p. 444). If there's only one constituency or homogeneous interests at home, the international negotiator's alternatives are limited. Similarly, Raiffa (1982) notes that multiple coalitions made the task of multilateral diplomacy hard at the Law of Sea negotiations (1973–80) but they also facilitated the search for joint gains through sets of compromises.

There is another logic that forms the backdrop for this essay: the presence of multiple constituencies can create flexibility for the international negotiator to explore alternatives but, equally, they can create deadlocks if the negotiators' hands are tied, and they cannot find a formula or a package that can be ratified back home. Thus, negotiators cannot accept formulas at the international level when domestic constituencies actively oppose them. Raiffa's (1982: 274) analysis of multiple coalitions rests on a prior assumption: the ambiguity of national interests in a multilateral negotiation with many issues. However, agriculture may be one of those historic issues of an affixed national interest, even where it is Pareto sub-optimal, because of the relays between domestic and international coalitions.

Put another way, Putnam's (1988) and Raiffa's (1982) analyses are about multiple interests at the domestic level leaving room to maneuver for international negotiators. The situation of agriculture has led to singular interests or peak preferences at national level accounting for multiple coalitions among states at the international level. However, each state in a coalition has its hands tied to homogenous domestic interests, making agreements among various coalitions difficult. The India case is interesting: at the beginning of the Doha Round India featured both pro-trade (offensive) and anti-trade (defensive) interests in agriculture. As the Round unfolded defensive interests became dominant.

Coalitional analysis is an important causal variable when attending to North-South negotiations. Coalitions represent the developing world's options in a distribution of power where they lack effective points of pressure on the developed world. International coalition-building is not just a way of representing preferences from the domestic to the international level, but for the developing world, it is the primary way of making their demands at the international level. In a distribution of power, the developing world is stuck in a "definitional inferiority" (Zartman, 1971: ix). It is, therefore, not a coincidence that most agricultural coalitions at the international level are from the developing world: farmers from the United States do not need a coalition to make their demands at the international level.[5] The United States Trade Representative (USTR) is

5 A big exception is the Cairns Group formed in 1986 that includes both developed and developing countries. This will be discussed in the following section.

enough. Nevertheless, this does not negate strong interest group pressures at home for the USTR. Domestic constituencies must still ratify the agreement.

The most effective way of coalition building for the developing world in the past was through bloc diplomacy in which several developing countries came together on a variety of issues, often going beyond a singular forum. Developing country blocs reduced transaction costs of collective action, while at the same time ensuring high numbers in the coalition – a show of unity with large members bearing the costs of collective action.[6] The G77 that arose with the formation of the United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD) in 1964 is an example. The original 77 countries (now 134 in 2016) were concerned about the lack of market access to developed country markets and the discrimination against their products (explained later). Narlikar (2003) explains the formation of such coalitions in their ability to cater to mixed interests and also reduce transaction costs for members that lack resources. Narlikar and Tussie (2006) also note that bloc type diplomacy may be most effective for developing countries. This claim is certainly validated through the evidence presented later on the provision of preferential treatment for developing country products (although these mostly excluded agriculture) and later the inclusion of agriculture in GATT/WTO negotiations.

Bloc diplomacy had its limitations and delivered few concessions. It provided an identity to the developing world in the post-colonial era and this was sometimes articulated in the form of an anti-Western and anti-market ideology. The domestic counterparts were forms of state-led socialism and import substitution industrialization. Thus, the demands the developing world made through the GATT for market access often sounded contradictory. Winham (1986) note that the developing world's ideological demands during the Tokyo Round were not suitable for GATT, which followed a more technical style of deliberation. Similarly, Krasner (1986) noted that the developing world often sought to change the rules of the game in international economic interactions but that, lacking power, they could be ignored by great powers. Nevertheless, the ideology may have disguised material interests that were aligned in favor of international trade.[7] Hudec (1986) notes that even the creation of UNCTAD

6 Blocs are thus like a club good with institutional supply mechanisms (Sandler & Tschirhart 1980). Just as large heterogeneous groups/clubs need state intervention, large coalitions with heterogeneous interests and varied issues need institutional hegemons.

7 Economists question the bias in international relations that posits the developed world as playing by rules and the developing world that remains ideological. Hoekman et al. (2006: 94) writes in the context of agriculture protection in the developed world: "To a significant extent WTO rules reflect the interests of rich countries: they are less demanding about

allowed the developing world to effectively make its case at the GATT. Demands for agricultural trade liberalization in the 1970s and 1980s followed a similar pattern that was pro-trade. Nevertheless, there was a big contradiction between an ideological bloc diplomacy and seeking market access through trade. The bloc coalition's effectiveness, therefore, was limited to obtaining preferential treatment for the developing world and, when the Uruguay Round started, getting a seat at the table.

Issue-based coalitions began to replace bloc coalitions during the Uruguay Round. Four conceptual reasons may be given for this: (1) moving a technical agenda at the Uruguay Round on specific issues demanded a different strategy than a bloc coalition could provide; (2) further reduced costs of collective action for Global South countries; (3) the success of coalition building with Global North countries; (4) rise of democratic politics in the developing world, which necessitated domestic consultations.[8] On the first point, the developing world played a constructive role in shaping the agenda on services trade negotiations by being inside the negotiating rooms (Singh 2008). A developing country Ambassador, Felipe Jaramillo of Colombia, in fact led the Uruguay Round's Group on Negotiation in Services (GNS). On the second point, by the time of the Uruguay Round, the developing world had some experience with both coalitional politics and technical aspects of forming issue-based coalitions. Regional powers such as India and Brazil also bore the costs of collective action for issue-based coalitions. The two countries headed the G10 coalitions before the Uruguay Round. The 1970s and early 1980s were the zenith of Global South advocacy in the UN (Cox 1979; Rothstein 2015). The move to issue-base diplomacy did not diminish bloc coalitions like G77 though they gradually became less important. Third, the developing world also joined in moderate coalitions with the Global North. The GNS, which Singh (2008) calls 'the café au lait' effect was an example: it delivered an agreement on services that was widely acceptable to the developing world.[9] Narlikar (2003)

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distortionary policies that are favoured by these countries and they largely mirror the 'best practice' disciplines that have over time been put in place by them."

8 The obverse holds for the rise of bloc diplomacy: when the developing world was mostly excluded from international negotiations, and not quite responsive to its domestic interests, bloc diplomacy was an efficient way of cutting transaction costs for collective action. The interests were mainly aligned toward agenda-setting and earning a seat at the negotiation table.

9 The logic of moderate coalitions lies in 'the radical flanks effect' identified in social movement theory. Haines (1984) provides empirical evidence that during the civil rights movement in the United States businesses supported moderate groups and avoided radical groups. The meaning of moderation is defined through what is identified as radical. In international negotiations often the moderation is defined through identifying hardline groups.

calls these crossover coalitions. Fourth, the rise of democracy and domestic consultations in the developing world led to varied pressures on the state that could no longer be accommodated with bloc-type politics. Argentina's defection from the G10 Group opposing a services agenda, to join the pro-agriculture liberalization Cairns Group in response to its agricultural interests, is an example.

The issue-based coalitions identified above are not strictly around a single-issue. As with services or agriculture, they include a gamut of issues. Nevertheless, they are different from bloc diplomacy in providing an issue-focused and technical, rather than an ideological approach to issues. Odell and Narlikar (2006) cite the lack of focus among coalitional members, and the ability of the developed world to make side payments to break such coalitions. They focus on the inability of the Like-Minded Group to make a difference before the Doha Round. On the other hand, the G20 combines features of both bloc diplomacy and issue-focus and has been effective in representing the developing world's interests at the WTO and other multilateral forums (Narlikar & Tussie 2004).

Bloc diplomacy from the developing world was predicated on a dominance of the international level and mixed in ideological demands with those for market access. Before bloc diplomacy, the developing world was mostly ignored in GATT negotiations. Bloc diplomacy was effective in raising developing world issues in GATT and the UN and, as the next section shows, earning it a seat at the table during the Uruguay Round. However, while the rise of multiple coalitions has made the process both participatory and accountable (Singh 2015), by the same token it has also produced negotiation deadlocks. International negotiations have always featured two levels for the domestic and the international. Bloc diplomacy simplified domestic interests in the developing world and was effective for agenda-setting, in this case inclusion of agricultural issues in multilateral negotiations. Once included, bloc tactics are no longer effective. Multiple coalitions have not been effective in resolving deadlocks, but they do address developing countries domestic interests in all their complexity rather than simplifying them. The next section examines the broad empirical history of agricultural negotiations from bloc to issue-based diplomacy at the GATT and the WTO.

Historical Context: Agricultural Coalitions

Prior to the Uruguay Round the coalitional politics were binary or distributional – with the developing world advocating for inclusion of agriculture in the trade rounds, and the developed world standing in opposition. The impossibility of a win-set at the international level created the need for side-payments, such as non-reciprocal trade preferences rather than agricultural liberalization. The lack of a win-set also resulted in continuing a system of historical or imperial preferences. After the Uruguay Round, developed countries have lacked the strong alternative of side-payments, even though they continued to be made in some instances, and have found it hard to liberalize at home. For many countries in the developing world, the shift from asking for liberalization to making liberalization concessions themselves has been equally hard: like the developed countries, domestic constituencies in countries like India do not support agricultural liberalization. Therefore, while coalitions have multiplied at the global level, the win-set has not quite widened to allow for agreement, though there were a few close calls.

The agricultural coalitional politics at the GATT/WTO are analyzed here and in the next sub-section on India mostly for the Uruguay Round and thereafter. However, a brief note on the bloc diplomacy, which preceded the Uruguay Round is important for providing some context for the developments since the Uruguay Round. As India's interests were fairly well-aligned within the G77 bloc, and the country served as one of its leaders, the brief discussion of bloc diplomacy is a common context for the developing world and India. Table 1 summarizes the convergence and divergence between the developing world's and India's position on agriculture.

The formation of UNCTAD in 1964 reflected the frustration of the developing world in opening markets for its products at the GATT. In the 1950s, the developing world witnessed an erosion of the imperial preferences, a holdover from the colonial era. Agriculture markets grew increasingly protectionist in Western Europe as the incipient European Economic Community (EEC) introduced its Common Agricultural Policy in 1962 to support its own farmers with a combination of domestic subsidies, export credits, and import quotas. The EEC's agricultural imports mostly only covered the difference between its production and consumption. Meanwhile, the United States had completely excluded agriculture from multilateral trade rounds at the GATT. The so-called Haberler Report in 1956 (GATT 1956) and subsequent GATT reports critiqued agricultural trade restrictions in the developed world. Committee II of GATT, for example, noted that quantitative trade restrictions impacted 87 percent of wheat production, 52 percent of sugar production, and 84 percent of butter production in the developed world (quoted in Curzon 1965: 192).

The developing world's strategy toward agriculture changed with the formation of the G77 coalition at UNCTAD. Instead of seeking market access, G77 advocated for market guarantees both in terms of quotas and in prices. This advocacy culminated in the Declaration of Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) at the UN General Assembly in 1974. G77 advocacy in general rested on several economic realities: (1) frustrations with GATT

TABLE 1 *Trade coalitions history: The developing world and India on agriculture*

	Developing World	India
Bloc diplomacy period 1960s–early 1980s	Formation of coalitions such as G77 seeking agricultural market access – results in Special and Differential treatment and Generalized System of Preferences	One of the leaders in G77 and a beneficiary from S&D and GSP
Mixed diplomacy (Uruguay Round) early 1980s–late 1990s	*Cairns Group*: seeks agriculture liberalization *G10*: opposes new issues and seeks agriculture access G77: seeks further S&D *Like-Minded Group* (late 1990s): seeks S&D	India was a leader of G10 and G77 & LMG member
Issue-based diplomacy late 1990s–present	*G20*: Mixed interests, offensive and defensive *G33*: seeks safeguards	India, member of G20 and G33, seek market access on trade, but has hands tied on opening its own agriculture.

on receiving trade concessions, (2) dependence among several ex-colonies on imperial preferences that were eroding, and (3) the shift toward state-led central planning efforts in the developing world, which turned away from markets. The net result of the G77 advocacy was the Generalized System of preferences that provided non-reciprocal but quota-regulated access to the developing world starting in 1971 and instituted through Tokyo Round's Enabling Clause in 1979. Although GSP mostly covered manufactured goods, several agricultural goods such as cotton or semi-processed agricultural goods such as cocoa paste were also covered. Meanwhile, the Lomé Conventions applied to the agricultural trade in general between the EEC and ACP (Ravenhill 1985). The United States had its own system of agricultural preferences, including quantitative restrictive restrictions on sugar exports from the developing world.

Even before the ink dried on the Enabling Clause, the developing world was frustrated with both the restrictive nature of the quotas in agriculture and the conditions that the developed world applied in maintaining these quotas such as reverse preferences for developed country goods. In the lead up to the Uruguay Round, the developing world shifted its coalitional strategies again, albeit while trying to maintain its preferential treatment at the same time.

Inclusion and Mixed Coalitions 1979–2003

Three coalitions best reflect the mixed interests of the developing world at the Uruguay Round: G10, G77, and the Cairns Group (see Table 2). The G10 arose out of the Informal Group of five countries at the GATT. From the GATT ministerial in 1982 and the 1986 Punta del Este conference that launched the Uruguay Round, the main focus of the G10 became the opposition to inclusion of new issues such as services trade and intellectual property at the Round, but in its inception, G10 also advocated for inclusion of agriculture in the negotiations. The coalition embodied in many ways the suggested trade-off that became a possibility at the Uruguay Round between old issues (agriculture and textiles) and the new high-tech issue areas. Ostry (2008) employed the term grand bargain for this trade-off. In hindsight, and as the following analysis will show, there may not have been much of a bargain for the developing world in agriculture.

The G77 bloc and Cairns Group flanked the G10 in their differing stances on agriculture. G77 continued its advocacy for special and differential treatment at the GATT through instruments such as the Generalized System of Preferences. However, it concentrated on manufactured goods and was not that effective in agriculture. The pro-trade Cairns Group, named after the August 1986 meeting in Australia, made a difference in arguing for liberalization.[10] It garnered the support of the United States and included developed country 'moderate' player such as Australia and New Zealand, who had always been effective in creating a win-set among the hardline alternatives of other players (Higgot & Cooper 1990). Despite this moderate claim and the support from the United States, the Cairns Group was marginalized by the December 1990 Brussels meeting of the Uruguay Round as Australia hardened its position on liberalization, the US agriculture interests in dairy and livestock moved away from trade, and the EC refused to budge on CAP. The developing country members of the Cairns Group were also almost all members of the G77 coalition, which continued to seek non-reciprocal market access.

The end-game of the Uruguay Round in agriculture involved only the US and the EU in the Blair House accords of November 1992 and in 1993. The Uruguay

10 The original members of the Cairns Group were: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Fiji, Hungry, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand, and Uruguay.

TABLE 2 *Major developing country coalitions affecting agriculture*

G10 (Uruguay Round): Hardline developing countries led by Brazil and India opposed to inclusion of new issues (services, intellectual property) on the agenda. Bloc coalition in Narlikar's (2003) terminology.
Cairns Group (Uruguay and Doha Rounds): a crossover coalition of around 17 countries including developed and developing countries that push for offensive interest in agriculture.
Like Minded Group: Developing countries opposed to inclusion of Singapore issues on the Doha Round agenda. They also pushed for special and differential treatment and credits for autonomous liberalization. A bloc type coalition.
G20 (Doha Round): A group that varies in strength from 19–22 but called G20, led by Brazil and India. It pushed for agricultural reform and brought together offensive and defensive interests. Narlikar (2003) calls it a smart coalition in bringing together old style bloc diplomacy with new research and issue-based alliance politics.
G33 (Doha Round): A group of developing countries asking for certain agricultural products to be self-certified by developing countries as 'special products' and 'special safeguard mechanism' and exempt from some forms of tariff reduction formulas being applied.
G90 (Doha Round): An umbrella group of least developed countries, which includes the ACP (Asia, Caribbean, Pacific) group that extended preferential access with EU through the Cotonou Agreement, and African Group that includes most of the countries of the African Union.
Group on Cotton (Doha Round – Cancun Ministerial): Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali. Pushed for elimination of cotton subsidies in developed countries.
G5 (Doha Round): United States, European Union, Brazil, India and Australia. G5 met regularly to try to break the frequent deadlocks in the Doha Round, mostly over agriculture.
G4 (Doha Round): G5 excluding Australia. Active in the lead up to the 2008 Geneva Ministerial and shortly thereafter.

Round Agreement on Agriculture succeeded in 'tariffication' of non-tariff barriers, but the base years employed (1988–90) featured high prices. The ensuing tariff cuts reflected these years and de facto tariff cuts were not that meaningful for the developing world. Furthermore, as Figure 1 shows, developed countries received most of the agriculture concessions at the Uruguay Round. This data is based on agriculture concessions received minus given for 37 countries including the EU12 (Finger et al. 1996). While the binary regression is statistically significant at the 95 percent level (Table 3), the results must be read with caution and are mostly indicative of who received the concessions rather than causal linkages.[11] Nevertheless, even as an indictor of concessions, Fig. 1 shows that developed rather than developing countries were net winners in agriculture tariff concessions received. The US received the highest net concessions, followed by Australia, who benefitted from its position as leader of the Cairns Group. Japan was the only developed country to receive net negative concessions in agriculture. Furthermore, URAA allowed the EC to front-load its commitments with the high prices of the base year (Hoda & Gulati 2007: 126). The total amount of subsidies to agriculture in the OECD also increased from $271.2 billion in 1986–88 to $330.6 billion in 1998–2000 (Clapp 2006: 565).

The URAA agriculture deal was recognized as unbalanced even in the developed world by the late 1990s. The disappointment of the URAA led to some retrenchment in the developing world in the lead up to the Doha Round. The Like-Minded Group (LMG) formed in 1996, to oppose the further inclusion of

TABLE 3 *Effects of per capita income on percentage of agriculture concessions received minus given at the Uruguay Round*

ag_recminusgiven	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>|t|	[95% Conf. Interval]	
gdp_pci_con2005us	.0002231	.0001075	2.08	0.045	4.84e-06	.0004413
_cons	−5.21928	2.619267	−1.99	0.054	−10.53668	.0981149

11 GDP per capita does not hold up as a statistically significant variable in a multiple regression with many variables, especially those that speak to export market diversification or coalitional activity. Separately Singh (forthcoming 2016) seeks to demonstrate that export market diversification and coalitional activity such as Cairns Group is much more important than per capita income in accounting for agriculture tariff concessions.

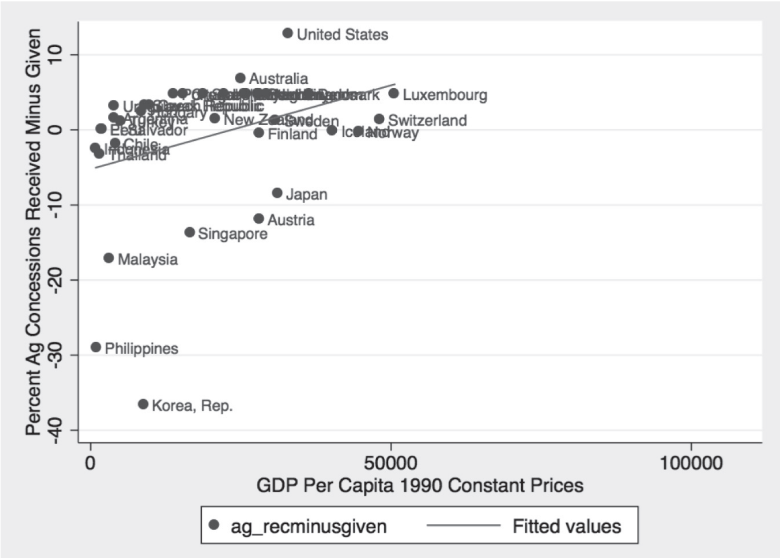

FIGURE 1 *Relationship between gross domestic product per capita and percentage of net agricultural concessions received at the Uruguay Round.*

new issues (known as Singapore Issue after the 1996 GATT ministerial), and G77 advocated for implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements and also special and differential treatment (see Narlikar and Odell 2006 for LMG). The LMG initially included Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Tunisia. Countries joining later included Jamaica, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe. However, by the time of the September 2003 Cancun ministerial, the outlines of the many agricultural coalitions in the Doha Round were emergent. The URAA was possible because the end game featured a bilateral negotiation between the US and the EU. The Doha Round has been unable to marginalize the many coalitions from the developing world while the win-set among these coalitions is not obvious. The in-built agenda of the Doha Round included agriculture, and this now started with all parties at the table.

Deadlocks and Issue-based Coalitions: 2003–Present

The 2003 Cancun ministerial turned the Doha Round into a North-South issue, even more than the round's moniker as the Doha Development Agenda when it started in November 2001. The emotional press conference given by the Cotton Four ministers from Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mali dramatized the plight of the farmers in these countries. Cotton subsidies in the US, they argued, depressed world prices and kept 10 million farmers in poverty (Barber et al. 2004). The Cancun ministerial also gave birth to the G20, which mixed in offensive and defensive sentiments in agriculture, and included China, Brazil, and India. Two other coalitions also emerged after the Cancun ministerial. One of these was the G90, which emerged from the Cotonou agreement with the EU that became effective in 2003 and updated the Lomé Convention. G90, therefore, represented a mix of the G77 and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) countries and argued for non-reciprocal market access. While the G90 represented the least developed countries, the G33 represented the developing world with a similar demand, albeit in this case for protectionism based on Special Safeguard Mechanisms (SSM) for food security and crises, and Special Products that would be exempt from tariff cuts. In 2014, the G33 had 46 members.

The closest the Doha Round came to agreement was the 2008 July framework. The US offered to cap its subsidies at $14.5 billion at the 2008 meetings, but India and China rejected this move, while Brazil was willing to accept it. However, this offer disguised the politics of box shifting in agriculture. During the Uruguay Round, WTO members had agreed to three 'boxes' for agriculture subsidies: green box or non trade-distorting subsidies were to be allowed, blue box subsidies were to be cut or allowed under special circumstances, while red or amber box trade-distorting subsidies were to be completely eliminated. A few things were proposed for the July 2008 Package: the green box was to be tightened; the blue box was to be expanded but with caps for products and overall restricted to 2.5 percent of agricultural production in the developed world and 5 percent in the developing world. On amber box, the EU would cut its subsidies by 70 percent, the US by 60 percent, and other countries by 45 percent. However, the actual offers fell short. The politics of box-shifting before 2008 also entailed countries trying to move their subsidies into green or blue boxes. The US and the EU even came up with their own Sensitive Products category, similar to the G33 SSM mechanism, which sought to exclude products such as sugar from negotiations.

Since 2008, despite frequent negotiations the agriculture issue did not move forward except for a few exceptions. The first issue involved Brazil's successful challenge to the calculated $3.4 billion subsidies in cotton that the US paid its farmers (Singh 2014). After successive appeals and delays, the US finally settled the issue at the end of September 2014 with a $300 million payment to Brazil rather than a reduction in its subsidy program. The second issue involved India's demurral in July 2014, over issues of food security, from the December 2013 WTO Bali Accord that would produce $10 billion in trade gains through reductions in customs duties (Gupta & Ganguly 2014). This issue is discussed in the next section.

India and Brazil's 'go-it-alone' strategies are representative of the difficulty of finding a win-set in agriculture through issue-based coalitional politics. Developing countries in general blamed Brazil, China and India in the last decade for not representing their interests faithfully in the negotiations. In 2004, Brazil and India were inducted into the Five Interested Parties (FIP), which also included Australia, EU, and the US, and later the G4, which did not include Australia. When India walked out from the 2008 framework negotiations, the accusations against representation became especially acute. Earlier, an attempt in 2006 to bring the G20, G33, and the G90 together into a G110 was also unsuccessful (Clapp 2007: 50). The next section takes a granular look at India to provide a sense of India's evolving domestic interests, and the limitations they entail for international coalition-building. This analysis is mindful of the bottom-up pressures in agriculture that were prefaced in the introduction.

India and the GATT/WTO Agricultural Negotiations

In this section, we detail India's interests and present a case study that supports our argument that the emergence of multiple issue-based coalitions – each of which represents specific interests of their members and the complexity of their domestic politics – has made agreement less, rather than more likely. Prior to the Doha Round, India joined bloc coalitions such as the G77 to pursue its objective of securing preferential market access. Since the beginning of the Doha Round, India began to participate in issue-based or mixed coalitions such as the G20 and G33 to accommodate its multiple core interests in agriculture. The Indian case demonstrates why the move from bloc coalitions to multiple issue based coalitions has made reaching agreements more difficult.[12]

Agriculture and the GATT: India's Position before the Doha Round

As a primarily agrarian country that embraced import substitution industrialization during the 1950s, India used import and export restrictions in agriculture to keep the farm sector protected and pursued its interests at the international level through bloc coalitions. A severe food shortage in the mid-1960s helped put in place a set of policies that pursued food security by focusing mainly on foodgrain production. India exported a few farm and plantation

12 At last count, the agriculture negotiations landscape had sixteen coalitions (see Table 2 for our summary). World Trade Organization. "Groups in the agriculture negotiations." At https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/agric_e/negoti_groups_e.htm, accessed September 5, 2015.

products but did not make agricultural export either a priority or a platform for its growth strategy throughout this period.

As part of the G77, India's focus in multilateral trade negotiations was primarily on preferential market access. During the Uruguay Round, India's primary goal was to make sure that its ability to maintain its public food distribution system was not compromised. It also sought to ensure that its ability to maintain food security through self-sufficiency in food grain production remained intact. After the country went through economic liberalization in 1991, the government recognized that the sector could, with external and domestic reforms, benefit from the opportunity to export farm products.

The G10, in which India spent most of its negotiating capital during the Uruguay Round, mainly focused on preventing the inclusion of services, investment and intellectual property rights into the negotiation agenda. Other G10 members such as Argentina, that made inclusion of agriculture a centerpiece of their negotiating position, continued this advocacy through the CAIRNS group. However, India was not opposed to the inclusion of agriculture in the trade negotiations and after adopting liberal economic policies in 1991, even saw an interest in expanding farm exports (Nag & Thomas 1992: 87). Indian discussions on the Dunkel Draft[13] show two main concerns: one, the likely impact of the URAA subsidy caps on India's public food distribution system and two, the likely impact of the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement on farmers' ability to use their own seeds (Nag & Thomas 1992, Menon 1993). Policymakers saw opportunity for growth in agricultural exports if domestic policies were suitably amended and if, at the same time, developed countries reduced their farm subsidies (Nag & Thomas 1992). In the end, India's position on the URAA was cautiously optimistic – it remained concerned about developed world subsidies but was somewhat optimistic that if the subsidies came down, India could emerge as an exporter.

The Indian government's optimism about India's export prospects can be traced to the following five factors. First, during the 1980s, the farm sector maintained an average growth rate of 3.8 percent (Department of Economic Affairs 1990). There was no sign of alarm or evidence of crisis in official reports of the time – the alarms were sounded later during the 1990s. Second, studies by agricultural economists suggested that India had a comparative advantage in certain commodities as well as in some fruits and vegetables and

13 Written in 1991 by Arthur Dunkel, the Director General of the GATT (1980–1993), the Dunkel Draft was the document that collated all available proposals for negotiations at the time and laid the foundation of the Uruguay Round agreements and the future World Trade Organization.

would likely benefit from agricultural liberalization at the international level (Gulati & Sharma 1992). Third, and somewhat related, a group of farmers, who had been demanding higher prices for their produce, began arguing very vocally in favor of opening up and were demanding less controls on the farm sector at the domestic level (Padmanabhan 1993). Fourth, the main opposition to including agriculture in the negotiations came from another group of farmers that were worried about intellectual property rather than about market access.[14] Policymakers in New Delhi had to balance the interest of both these groups. Finally, given India's balance of payments problems, policymakers were confident that they would be able to protect the Indian market from foreign competition in the farm sector by using quantitative restrictions on imports even while India could export to other countries. Further, during the Uruguay Round, Indian negotiators renegotiated bound tariffs on commodities to levels as high as 100–300 percent (Gulati 2002).[15] The threat of price decline through import surges or global volatility of prices was minimized.

The Agreement on Agriculture that emerged as a result of the Uruguay Round negotiations neither threatened India's self-sufficiency in food grain production nor its goal of subsidizing farm inputs to maintain food production and that of subsidizing food distribution and marketing to make food accessible to its rural and urban poor. At the same time, it potentially promised opportunities for export if further negotiations were successful in bringing down subsidies in developed countries.

Agriculture and the WTO: India's Position during the Doha Round

The opportunity to re-negotiate the Agreement on Agriculture arose when the Doha Round of negotiations were launched in November 2001. India's initial negotiating position outlined both offensive and defensive interests. However,

14 In December 1992, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS), a state-level farmers' organization ransacked the Bangalore office of Cargill's India affiliate to protest potential change in laws for patenting seeds. Farmers were afraid that new intellectual property laws would take away farmers' right to produce, modify, use and sell seeds. The KRRS eventually formed an alliance with farmers' association from other parts of the country to organize a massive show of protest in New Delhi (Menon 1993).

15 One exception was rice on which India agreed to zero tariff. At the time of the negotiations and during the 1990s, rice and other commodities enjoyed protection because balance of payments problems allowed the Indian government to impost quantitative restrictions on imports. However, this layer of protection disappeared after India took down those restrictions as a result of a WTO dispute. Subsequently, the tariff on rice was negotiated to 70 percent.

as the Doha Round progressed and as the Indian economy went through substantial changes, India's primary focus in the agricultural negotiations gradually veered toward emphasizing its defensive interests – of finding ways to protect its resource poor farmers if and when tariffs came down. Eventually, these interests led India to take firm stands in 2008 and 2013–14. To understand India's position on agriculture during this period, analyzing the domestic political economy of Indian agriculture is important. Given India's position as a middle/emerging power with a relatively modest share of international trade[16] and domestic constraints, Indian policymakers concluded that their best course of action would be to pursue their interests through issue-based and mixed coalitions. Here, we begin by identifying the political and economic interests that shaped India's negotiating positions and its position in various international coalitions. We then trace the evolution in India's negotiating positions. We conclude by unpacking how these interests and coalition choices have shaped India's behavior at the negotiating table.

The Farm Sector in India: Economic Challenges and Political Constraints

India's initial negotiating proposal for the Doha Round was formulated at a time when an agrarian crisis in India was beginning to unfold. This necessitated an emphasis on India's defensive interests from the very beginning of the negotiations. After the initial success of the Green Revolution in the 1980s, the farm sector in India hit stagnation in the 1990s.[17] Annual growth in the farm sector declined to 2.29 percent in the 1990s. Even starker was the decline in the growth of food grain production: from 3.54 percent during the 1980s it declined to 1.92 percent during the 1990s (Planning Commission 2002: 514). Among other things, the Tenth Five Year plan identified low public investment, problems with supply of necessary inputs and credit as well as lack of reforms in the policy framework on marketing, processing and exporting agricultural products as major problems afflicting the farm sector (Planning Commission 2002: 518–24).[18] Policy changes were seen as a necessary tool to help farmers

16 The 2002 Trade Policy Review of India put India's share of world trade at 0.67 percent (WTO 2002).

17 The Green Revolution refers to the remarkable increase in foodgrain production in India during the 1970s and 1980s that transformed India from a chronically food-deficient economy to one that was self-sufficient. This was achieved through policy changes and use of farm inputs.

18 The Planning Commission is a government agency in India that was set up to assess the state of resources in the country and to formulate plans to utilize those resources effec-

diversify into production of crops other than food grains. The decelerating growth in agriculture led to stagnant rural incomes – agriculture has historically played a significant role in reducing poverty in rural India.

The composition of India's farm sector also posed challenges for trade policy. India's overwhelming focus on livelihood and food security issues – both in India's initial proposal on agriculture at the Doha Round as well as its position on safeguards and food security subsequently – should be placed in this context. According to the 2001 census, the sector was composed of 127 million farm units of which over 80 percent were classified as small and marginal farms, which practiced subsistence farming.[19] Farmers' suicides, another grim reality which continues to plague India's farm sector today, began to make headlines around the time the negotiators were consulting with various stakeholders to put together the initial proposal (Rao 2000). Finally and not least, food security was important to India because nearly 260 million people were living in poverty when the proposal was formulated (Department of Economic Affairs 2002). These economic and social realities came together to define India's defensive interest in the agricultural negotiations.

India also had offensive interests. Economists identified several crops such as rice, fruits and vegetables in which India enjoyed comparative advantage and envisioned a future role for India as an exporter (Gulati & Kelly 1999: 102). However, it became clear to policymakers that becoming an exporter would require substantive reforms in the farm sector (Planning Commission 2002: 524). Some of the reform efforts, for example, those in agricultural marketing, began soon after the initial negotiating proposal was submitted. It was clear to policymakers that the reforms would take time. Thus, despite export prospects, India's immediate interest lay in protecting its farmers and buy time till they became competitive exporters.

These socio-economic challenges were conveyed to the negotiators in India's Department of Commerce during wide-ranging consultations in 2000 with representatives from state governments, political parties and farmers' representatives to frame India's agricultural strategy for the Doha Round (Department of Commerce 2000). In India's federal system, state governments are important players in the farm sector since they have jurisdiction over farm sector policymaking and reform. Farm sector interest groups are not as well organized as their counterparts in the developed world and suffer from

tively for development. Between 1950 and 2012, the agency produced twelve five-year plans to provide direction to economic policy.

19 Small and marginal farms have landholdings that are smaller than 2 hectares (or 5 acres). (Food and Agricultural Organization 2010).

collective action problems. However, they have an impressive capacity for political mobilization, which gives them de facto veto power in policy dialogues. Political parties with large farm sector constituents also articulate farm sector interests and in India's recent coalition governments, have often wielded veto power (Gupta 2011). These political constraints shaped negotiators' actions.

While the Indian economy went through a period of high growth after India's agricultural strategy for Doha Round was crafted, the outcome of such growth for the farm sector was mixed. The deceleration in food grain production, an alarming trend during the previous decade, was reversed. Agricultural GDP growth accelerated to an average 3.6 percent during 2007–2012 (Department of Agriculture and Cooperation 2013). India's profile as an exporter improved substantially – India's agricultural exports, worth $5 billion in 2003, stood at $39 billion in 2013, making it the seventh largest agricultural exporter in the world (USDA 2014). Most notably, India became the largest exporter of rice, unseating such traditional exporters as Thailand and Vietnam (Gulati, Jain & Hoda 2013). These developments underscore India's interest in being part of a coalition such as the G20.

Efforts at diversification of agriculture from a sole focus on food grain production to horticulture, livestock and fisheries got under way during the 2000s. However, it became clear that this effort for diversification needed time to yield the desired results. For example, it would translate into higher farm income only if growth in infrastructure and improvements in processing and retailing took place. Infrastructure growth, in turn, needed massive financing. Processing and retailing needed investment and policy reform. All of these proved to be challenging. The farm sector continued to be the largest employer – 52 percent of India's workforce was employed in the farm sector even as the number of farming units fell to 118 million. The situation was dire because India's agriculture, as a sector, contributed only 14.6 percent to the country's GDP in 2010–11 (Department of Agriculture and Cooperation 2013). Although sustained growth during the previous decade led to decline in poverty, 265 million people were living in poverty in India in 2011.[20] Finally, farmers' suicides continued unabated during the decade.[21] Overall, the socio-economic conditions that had shaped the

20 Calculation based on 2011 population of 1.21 billion and poverty rate of 21.9 percent (World Bank 2016).

21 In 2014, 5650 farmers committed suicides (National Crime Records Bureau 2016). Sainath, a journalist who has covered the farm sector for decades, estimates that 296,438 farmers have committed suicide in India since 1995 when NCRB started maintaining data (Sainath 2014).

initial proposal had not changed drastically after a decade, underlining the need for India to remain part of the G33 coalition.

India's Initial Negotiating Proposal and Its Evolution: 2001–2013

In this section, we present India's negotiating positions. The Doha Round "negotiations to modify the Agreement on Agriculture began because article 20 of the agreement mandated continued and fundamental reform of agricultural trade such that members would move towards "substantial progressive reductions in support and protection" (WTO 2015). Three areas emerged in the work program for negotiations: expansion of market access, reduction in export subsidies and reduction in trade-distorting domestic support.

As outlined above, India's initial negotiating position reflected both its defensive and offensive interests in the negotiations. On the one hand, the government sought to protect its farmers from the fluctuations of global markets. It wanted the flexibility to use tariffs and tariff-related measures to protect farm sector livelihoods and ensure food security – therefore, India's highest priority was to negotiate safeguards that would enable countries like India to protect its resource poor farmers. Here, India sought flexibility for domestic policy space that would allow the government to protect domestic producers from surges in imports as well as significant decline in import prices. The government further sought to protect the flexibilities it enjoyed in maintaining public stockholding and continuing public distribution of food grains. On the other hand, India also sought opportunities for "meaningful expansion" of farm exports by "securing effective market access in developed country markets" (Department of Commerce 2001). Finally, India wanted developed countries to reduce domestic support and eliminate export subsidies. The inclusion of both defensive and offensive interests in the initial proposal provided the motivation for India to seek out diverse coalitions such as the G33 and the G20. The political leadership told the negotiators that while the aggressive interests were important, protecting India's resource-poor farmers was the primary objective.[22]

As a result of Uruguay Round negotiations, India's average bound tariff on agricultural commodities have remained high at 113.5 percent (WTO 2014a). Although this would indicate that any proposed tariff reductions under the Doha Round were unlikely to have a major impact on farmers even if subsidies remained, policymakers in New Delhi wanted to have access to policy instruments that they could use to protect farmers in cases of import surges and global volatility of prices. Additionally, there were some crops and commodities,

22 Interviews with Indian negotiators, New Delhi, 2004.

such as rice and soybeans, on which the Uruguay Round bound tariffs were lower. If tariffs were to go down as mandated, the negotiators needed to find some mechanism with which they could protect farmers whenever surges occurred. Joining the G33 coalition, with its proposed mechanisms for safeguards, provided the answer.

The Agreement on Agriculture required reduction in domestic support and export subsidies in the countries that used them. The latter, mostly developed countries, had not made any progress toward that goal when the Doha negotiations began. Like most developing countries, India had an interest in seeing domestic support and export subsidies lowered in the developed world, particularly in the US and EU. India's specific concern was that subsidized imports would flood Indian markets, displacing Indian farmers.[23] This led India to join the G20 coalition.

Between 2002–2004, the Doha Round participants focused mostly on finding an acceptable formula for tariff reduction and on agreeing on modalities to deal with the sensitivities of member countries. For India, the most important issue was arriving at acceptable safeguards for developing countries seeking temporary protection and finding a modest market-opening tariff formula for them. The July Package in 2004 arrived at a consensus on the tiered formula for tariff reduction and on developing new safeguard measures such as Special Products (SP) and Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM).[24] Once the formula was in place, it was important for India to focus on the details of safeguard mechanisms for protecting its farmers.

During 2004–2008, the focus shifted to working out the specifics of safeguards such as SP and SSM along with several issues of interest for other developed and developing countries. With regard to SP, the main disagreement lay in the percentage of tariff lines that would be allowed exemption from tariff cuts. In case of SSM, the disagreements lay in the volume of surge and the price at which a country could trigger SSM to protect its farmers. India had interest

23 When the initial negotiating proposal was being formulated during 2000, the domestic support India gave to its farmers remained below the limits imposed by the URAA disciplines. Further, at the time of the Uruguay Round, India did not provide export subsidies. However, by 2007, the volume of India's domestic support became a matter of concern for policymakers and was behind India's position on food stockholding at the Bali meeting, discussed later.

24 Special products (SP) are products for which developing countries were promised extra flexibility in market access for food and livelihood security and rural development. Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) would allow developing countries to increase their tariff levels whenever a surge in import in a particular commodity threatened to affect domestic prices.

in both but given the technicalities involved in SSM and the nature of India's complex farm sector, SPs were better designed to address India's concerns. The negotiations during this period, while intense, ultimately ended in a stalemate when the membership met for a ministerial meeting in Geneva in 2008.

While SSM and SP continued to be key concerns, subsidies on public stockholding of food became an increasingly important issue for India during 2007–2008. The Green Box mechanism allowed countries to use subsidies to maintain their public stockholding of food – the subsidy for supplying food to the poor is exempt from limits. However, price support given to farmers, even to low income, resource poor farmers, is considered trade distorting and is "calculated as the difference between the present support price and the 1986–88 reference price multiplied by production that is eligible for the support" (WTO 2014b). For most developing countries, including India, this amount was capped at less than ten percent of the value of production. India became concerned that it would breach this permitted domestic support cap because of inflation and increase in production volumes. Indian negotiators, who became aware of this possibility as early as 2007, were concerned that notifying its breach in aggregate measure of support (AMS) to the WTO would likely invite political pressure, including a possible dispute case, from developed countries.[25]

Price support for public stockholding of food was not a new issue – the Africa Group had raised it as early as 2002 (WTO 2014b). It was one of the issues that found its place in the 2008 draft modalities. In 2011, when WTO members decided to restart talks and negotiate an agreement on trade facilitation, this was one of four agricultural issues selected from a much broader agenda that had stalled in 2008.[26] In particular, India wanted to renegotiate how the support for public stockholding was calculated. Its original intent was two-fold: first, to secure India's interests in continuing with price support for its low-income farmers without facing possible retaliation if the AMS limit was breached. A second goal was to bring balance to the negotiations by bringing up a development issue that was solely of interest to some developing countries.

25 Interviews with Indian negotiators, New Delhi, 2014.

26 The Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) addresses provisions that help movement and clearance of goods, including those in transit. It also contains measures for cooperation among customs and other departments that can ease the conduct of trade and custom compliance. Finally, it addresses the issue of providing technical assistance and building capacity in this area in all member countries. (WTO, "Trade facilitation," at https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tradfa_e/tradfa_e.htm).

India at the Bargaining Table: Multiple Issues and Coalitions

In this final section, we seek to trace India's membership in multiple coalitions to further its goals in farm sector negotiations and its impact on the outcome of the negotiations. As noted above, India joined other developing countries in putting together two coalitions: the G20 and the G33.

While the G20 was made up of countries with strong offensive and defensive interests, their common interest lay in putting pressure on the US and the EU to reduce their domestic support and eliminate export subsidies. This did not directly address India's concern for food security. However, the G20 created a strong developing country coalition that included consequential players such as China, Brazil, Argentina, Indonesia and others. As an emerging economy with a protected farming sector, India anticipated pressure for market opening from countries with strong export interests: the US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada and to a lesser extent from developing country exporters in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Indian negotiators calculated that formation of and membership in the G20 would allow India to diffuse pressure to open its market – such pressure was likely to come from both the above sets of countries. It would also reduce the potential threat that subsidized imports would flood its commodity markets. Membership in G20 provided India valuable support and the space to join the demandeurs without having to pay a high price for it. To be clear, India would not have been able to demand subsidy reduction from the US and EU without membership in such a coalition. Indian negotiators claim that Brazil agreed to not ask India for market opening in return for support in the G20.

India got together with China, Indonesia and other developing countries with strong defensive interests to form a second coalition: the G33. The G33's goal was to secure safeguards for their resource poor farmers as and when tariffs started to come down. Securing instruments such as Special Products and Special Safeguard Measures were an outcome of this collective demand. As three of the four most populous countries in the world, China, India and Indonesia's membership in G33 provided it with a level of legitimacy and collective capacity and power that India, by itself, would not have enjoyed. India's position in Geneva in 2008 reflected both its domestic interests and the need, arising out of those interests, to keep the G33 coalition together. While the negotiations broke down because of disagreements on the trigger and tariff hikes associated with SSM, it was China's objection to the terms on the table that scuttled the deal (Ismail 2009).

India's G33 membership was crucial in the December 2013 Bali Ministerial meeting as well. When India and the G33 introduced the food stockholding issue into the Bali agenda in November 2012, the US refused to pay attention to it in the initial stages of the negotiations. The G33 argued that "if a developing country government purchases food for its stocks at administered prices in order to support" low-income, resource-poor producers, "they should not have to count this towards the aggregate measure of support they provide" (Bridges 2012). They further argued that if developing countries procured food for domestic food aid at subsidized prices, that cost should not be calculated towards their AMS limits.[27] Finally, several developing country farm programs, such as those for farmer settlement, land reform programs, rural development and livelihood security should also be exempt from that ceiling. Along with G33, India made several suggestions throughout 2013 to find a solution to this problem – for example, it proposed that countries could use a price deflator to accommodate inflation and thus adjust for the rise in subsidies. The eventual hardening of India's position as well as its clear lack of trust of US promises on this issue in 2014 was a product of the US's refusal to negotiate at all throughout 2013. The presence of China in G33 as well as China's interest in getting the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) concluded added greatly to the eventual attention this issue received. China wanted a deal on TFA and lent its weight to the G-33 proposal once it realized that India was not going to agree to a TFA deal without some decision on the public stockholding issue. Eventually, China came up with the idea of a "peace clause" to break the stalemate. India, along with G33, agreed to support TFA in exchange. Subsequently, in July 2014, India withdrew its offer to ratify TFA on the grounds that its interest in protecting food security had not received adequate attention and that the work in Geneva during the first half of 2014 focused entirely on TFA at the cost of the public stockholding issue, which was of interest to India and other developing countries. Again, the agreement in Bali and the near-breakdown in 2014 can be traced to India's core interests in these negotiations.[28]

27 While India brought the issue to the forefront, research done by the South Centre in Geneva shows that several other developing countries, particularly from the African Group, used minimum support prices and some such as Ghana, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and others were close to breaching the AMS caps.

28 Eventually, in November 2014, India agreed to ratify the TFA when the US agreed that India will not be subject to a dispute on account of its subsidies to low-income farmers and that this "Peace Clause" would continue to stay in place until the members found a permanent solution. This decision was approved by the General Council – a legal point that India had insisted on. (*Bridges*, "WTO Members Sign off on Food Stocks, Trade Facilitation Decisions," 18:40, November 27, 2014)

Given its stage in development and the incomplete transformation from an agricultural to a manufacturing and service-based economy, India faces the challenge of juggling its diverse interests in agriculture. On the one hand, it is on its way to becoming an exporter in certain commodities and farm products and on the other, it needs to minimize socio-economic upheaval as the sector goes through a transformation that potentially involves displacing people and shrinking the number of workers dependent on the farm sector. In negotiations, this translates into somewhat contradictory coalition choices – it needs to belong in both protectionist and export-oriented coalitions to further its defensive and offensive interests in agriculture.

Conclusion

Our study generates a hypothesis: issue-based coalitions at international trade negotiations with strong domestic support find it hard to compromise or resolve their differences. The counter fact in the coalition-building literature is that the presence of multiple coalitions can widen the win-set in a multilateral negotiation. We have shown that the latter supposition rests upon the existence of multiple interests at the domestic levels, which allows some ambiguity and space for negotiators. In agriculture, historically strong domestic constituencies can exert intense pressures on negotiators leaving little room for ambiguity or compromise.

Prior to the Doha Round, homogenous national interests also led to deadlocks: developing countries wanted market access, and developed countries were against providing it. Before the Uruguay Round, the United States even kept agriculture off the negotiating table. The deadlocks were resolved through side payments such as preferential access. In the current context, there are developing countries that seek market access and others that only want preferential access. Developed countries also now seek market access to agriculture in the developing world, but except for a few countries in the G20 and the Cairns Group, agriculture is a highly protected sector in the developing world. At the beginning of the Doha Round, India featured divided interests in agriculture, but by 2008 it had become quite defensive. Therefore, multiple coalitions in agriculture tend to represent different states, and not different interests within the same state. These interests and the coalitional politics that represent them do not easily suggest a solution. Multiple coalitions representing agricultural interests have so far only produced deadlocks, if not the demise of the Doha Round.

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